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Case Study

Gunning for UID compliance

MAC Packaging and Metalcraft deliver black UID labels to hide aircraft weapons

Problem:

The Department of Defense (DoD) has mandated that certain assets and property it owns, including assets in the possession of Defense contractors, be tracked with unique, machine-readable identification numbers (UID). The UID policy aims to modernize the largest supply chain in the world – enabling government and private contractors to manage inventory more effectively.

Since the policy began to take shape in 2003, Defense contractors have worked to develop systems for complying with the two main processes required by the mandate – marking and registry of individual items.

Marking requires a machine-readable, permanent identifier – a two-dimensional data matrix that is engineered to last the lifetime of the item. Each matrix enables unique identification of individual items using existing data elements, including the manufacturer’s identification and the item’s serial number, among other elements.

Of course, the diversity of DoD’s purchasing means there is tremendous variance in how items become marked. Some contractors choose to directly inscribe the matrix on the individual item; many others use a durable label or data plate attached to the item.

And many items present a unique challenge when marking.

MAC Packaging Company, Inc. helps Defense contractors comply with the UID policy, and, normally, the UID labels they use – most often white or silver with black machine and human-readable marks – make items easy to find. Sometimes the label’s visibility creates problems for military applications.

The Tempe, Arizona-based company was preparing gun systems for receipt by DoD for helicopters and other military aircraft. And a reflective UID nameplate mounted on the outside of the gun system would make the aircraft easier for enemies to target. MAC Packaging needed a tag that would not attract attention in the air.

Solution:

Andy Munter, founder of MAC Packaging, decided he could reverse the tag design – create a black label – to make it invisible from the ground.

UID nameplate and label specialists at Metalcraft produced the design for Munter on anodized aluminum – one of the four families of label products they customize for Defense contractors.

The black tags included the required UID data matrix and optional linear bar codes, remaining machine and human readable at close range. Moreover, Metalcraft the print quality of the UID and MAC Packaging validated the information contained in each UID label to ensure speedy acceptance by DoD.

Then MAC Packaging managed the important registration of the gun systems' UIDs through the DoD's UID Registry and Wide Area Workflow – a secure web-based system for electronic invoicing, receipt and acceptance – before shipping the items.

Results:

The black reverse tags do not increase the visibility of the aircraft, nearly eliminating the chance of the tag reflecting in the sun in a combat situation.

“The black reversible tags created less of target to shoot at,” said Munter. “The data elements now imaged in silver worked just as well as a standard UID tag.”

The gun systems project created one of the first black UID tag designs, and Metalcraft was able to produce the tags in their standard turnaround time of seven to ten days. Today, about half of all UID tags produced by Metalcraft are black – meeting the demands of DoD, their contractors and partners like MAC Packaging.

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Call 800-437-5283 or visit www.idplate.com for more information on Metalcraft UID tags and their customers' solutions.